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Kim Duistermaat and Ilona Regulski (eds.) (with the collaboration of Gwen Jennes and Lara Weiss). *Intercultural Contacts in the Ancient Mediterranean. Proceedings of the International Conference at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, 25th to 29th October 2008* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 202). Leuven (Belgium). Peeters Publishers and Department of Oriental Studies, 2011. Pp. 597, illustrated throughout. € 85. ISBN 978-90-429-2451-2 (Hbk).

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The book contains the proceedings of the conference *Intercultural Contacts in the Ancient Mediterranean* (ICAM) which took place in 2008 in Cairo and was organised by the Netherlands-Flemish Institute. The purpose of these proceedings is to examine the Ancient Mediterranean as a whole, discuss a wide variety of crucial issues and promote fresh thinking in the field. As such, the publication investigates Mediterranean intercultural contacts from the Levant to Spain and from Egypt to Greece, from prehistory up to the Hellenistic period. Thirty five contributions are presented in six sections: I) Theory and methodology, II) Identifying foreigners and immigrants, III) Material evidence for contact, IV) Maritime trade and sea ports, V) Influences in iconography, ideology and religion, and VI) Administration and economy.

With respect to format and style, each academic paper is fully referenced, accompanied by pictures / drawings and often appendices, and followed by its corresponding bibliography. The vast majority of illustrations, maps and tables are presented in black and white or grey-scale. Most black and white drawings accompanying the articles are nicely presented. Nonetheless, in my opinion some grey-scale pictures of artefacts would benefit from colour or should be replaced with drawings.

With respect to content, there are several articles that stand out in academic quality (e.g. the work of Susan Sherratt). However, on the basis of my research interests, and the need to narrow the negotiated material, this review will focus on papers dealing partly or entirely with two cultures: Egypt, the Aegean and their interactions.

Melanie Wasmuth has produced an article which attempts to answer old and raise new questions over the problematic and multi-semantic Egyptian ethnicity. Wasmuth provides a brief but up-to-date profile of Egyptian ethnicity during the First Millennium BC, with some of the concepts she describes originating further back, to the Second Millennium BC or earlier. Although in places recent archaeological evidence would contradict some of her ideas, the article is definitely worth reading as it stimulates further thinking.

Another paper dealing with ethnicity in association with material culture (in this case, the ethnicity of the 'aamu' / Asiatics at Tell el-Dab'a) is that of Bettina Bader. Foreign pottery from Tell el-Dab'a has been examined thoroughly in research, particularly in the last two decades. However, the author wisely sees beyond pottery typology. She interprets the cultural background and interconnections of the inhabitants of Avaris on the basis of ceramics and ceramic imitations discovered in area A/II. Her contribution to research is important because her work demonstrates that the archaeological record from Tell el-Dab'a does not attest to the rapid accumulation of the 'Levantine' immigrants, who, although Egyptianised, maintained several traits of their own culture. Moreover, even though Bader's paper mainly focuses on genuine Levantine pottery and its imitations, it would be interesting to establish whether the locally-discovered Cypriot and Aegean pottery and their imitations suggest a similar story of slow accumulation of immigrants - if, of course, one accepts the presence of such ethnic minorities in the area.

Aspects of ethnicity and ethnic identity are also challenged in the paper of

Penelope Wilson about the possible presence of Greeks at Sais. The author wonders how these Greeks would ethnically 'see' themselves in Egypt, their social status and their perception by the Egyptians. The paper is generally well written but the text is given in one single block from beginning to end and the division of the content under separate titles would have made it easier to follow. In my opinion, the highlight of Wilson's paper is the intriguing discussion of a set of small three-dimensional figures carved in Limestone, discovered at Sais, which may show an Egyptian comic representation of a local Greek symposium scene. Such a discussion poses several questions over the Egyptian view of foreign customs and cultural practices within the borders of Egypt.

Having already approached the topic of Greek-Egyptian interactions during the First Millennium BC, we now move backwards in time in order to introduce a set of papers which deal exclusively with Aegean-Egyptian relations during the Second Millennium BC. Indeed, the presence of Aegeans (Minoans / Mycenaeans) in Egypt has always been an explosive topic for both Aegeanists and Egyptologists. It is currently imperative that old and new theories are re-examined in the light of fresh textual and archaeological evidence. The papers of Simandiraki-Grimshaw, Hassler, Van Wijngaarden and Burns do exactly that.

Anna Simandiraki-Grimshaw calls for the re-conceptualisation of culture as context for religious exchange. The author challenges the strict interpretation of religious exchange between two or more regions on the basis of the analysis of material culture only. To do so, she briefly discusses the widely-researched transformation of the Egyptian hippopotamus figure to the Minoan Genius. Such a wake-up call is certainly needed in the field of Aegean-Egyptian relations, when, at times, researchers place too much emphasis on religious exchange on the basis of artefacts, while they neglect the importance of sociology and particularly the sociology of religion.

With regard to Mycenaean-Egyptian relations, Astrid Hassler evaluates some of Petrie's ideas on the presence of a Mycenaean community in Gurob, while offering a brief update on the current state of research on the topic - particularly from the Egyptocentric point of view. Although Hassler's paper does not add new material to the discussion, it perfectly illustrates the size of the problem: the key question of the Mycenaean residency in Gurob will remain unanswered, unless new, conclusive archaeological evidence is put on the table.

The same crucial issue in Aegean-Egyptian relations is also handled by Gert Jan Van Wijngaarden who attempts to describe the Mycenaean imports in Egypt and vice versa while emphasizing the material aspects of the exchanged artefacts. Although the article summarises previous scholarship on the matter, Van Wijngaarden takes the discussion a step further by examining the products exchanged between the Greek Mainland and Egypt macroscopically; in other words, he considers how similar items (e.g. specific types of Mycenaean ceramics) appear in the archaeology of Cyprus and the Levant. The evidence is discussed in both space and time and although the article presents only a very brief overview of the exchanged material, it can perfectly delineate the profile of Mycenaean-Egyptian transactions. Interestingly, the last part of the paper is entitled 'Discussion' instead of 'Conclusions', possibly because the author feels that the debated questions need further (and constant) reconsideration.

In like manner to the two previous papers comes the useful contribution of Bryan E. Burns. The author places his focus on Mycenae and the Egyptian objects discovered there. However, Burns examines aspects of style in correlation with the significance and the symbolism of these imported objects. Most importantly, the author investigates the possible effect that these exotica had on the Greek mainland and declares that the impact of Egyptian items in

Mainland Greece is equally important to the description of the process of how and why these objects reached the Aegean. Burns' rather Aegeocentric approach of Mycenaean - Egyptian relations counterpoises the papers of Hassler and Van Wijngaarden and therefore is valuable in the publication.

Finally, two generic and rather theoretical / methodological contributions are mentioned as they enhance the understanding of all previously-presented papers, and especially those debating Aegean-Egyptian interactions. Diamantis Panagiotopoulos's absorbing discussion summarises the models of Ancient Mediterranean transculturality and functions as a 'tester and reviser' of knowledge and information with respect to the methodological structure of Aegean-Egyptian interactions. Similarly, Marie-Henriette Gates' paper, although discussing the Ancient Mediterranean as a whole, fits perfectly with the model of Aegean-Egyptian interactions, particularly because the author highlights some of the pitfalls in the handling of evidence used for the comprehension of Ancient Mediterranean interrelations.

Indeed, with respect to Aegean-Egyptian relations *per se*, the contributions of Hassler, Van Wijngaarden and Burns are demonstrative of current research on Mycenaean-Egyptian interactions. Nonetheless, as a researcher of Minoan-Egyptian relations, I feel that the latter are not represented in a sufficient manner in this publication (note that Simandiraki-Grimshaw only dedicates a couple of pages to the topic). A long and fully-referenced paper that deals explicitly with the Minoan-Egyptian liaison would have been useful. After all, in transcultural relations, historical coherence is necessary for the comprehension of social phenomena.

With the quality and content of all papers in mind, I believe that the majority of contributions in this publication target experienced researchers and not strict beginners in the field. Moreover, the book would be a useful teaching tool for postgraduate students. In conclusion, judging from the wide group of

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specialists that this book caters for (Aegeanists, Egyptologists, Mediterranean archaeologists, Levantine archaeologists, etc.) the publication succeeds in its main purpose, which is to generate radical discussion over critical issues in Mediterranean archaeology. The price is about right and a copy of this book should be available in the library of every archaeological institution.